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Splendor in the Hill Country Grass

BRIAN and SHIRLEY LOFLIN. 2006. **Grasses of the Texas Hill Country**. 2006. (ISBN 1-58544-467-7, flexbound with flaps). Texas A&M University Press, 4354 TAMU, College Station, TX 77843-4354, U.S.A. (**Orders:** 979-458-3982, 979-847-8752 fax; <http://www.tamu.edu/upress/>). \$23.00, 208 pp., 170 color photos, 7 lin art, 2 maps, black and white figures, glossary, bibliography, index, 5 3/4" × 8 1/2".

Grasses of the Texas Hill Country is a pictorial guide to grasses of the Hill Country region of Texas. Designed for the layperson, this book is full of crisp color photographs on a black background that clearly show the inflorescences (seed heads) of grasses common in the Hill Country as well as many other areas of Texas. Authors Brian and Shirley Loflin have created a guide that is easy to use with grasses grouped by similarities in inflorescence structure. The front and back book flaps serve as handy reference guides for inflorescence structure types and the icons used throughout the text.

The opening chapter of the book introduces readers to the Hill Country region and other vegetation regions of Texas. The introduction discusses the basic structures of grass and includes color images. Within the "how to use this book" section is a detailed explanation of the different inflorescence structure types used to organize the grasses in the book. This introductory section includes other items of interest such as a discussion on how plants are given scientific names, the meaning of those names, and a list of both the genus and common names of grasses included in this book.

There are seventy-seven grasses included in the book. Each grass has an associated profile that includes features of the species, plant uses, growing season information, and habitat information including soil, location and distribution. The features section of each profile includes important information such as typical height, description of grass inflorescence, some vegetation characteristics, whether the grass is cool or warm season, native or introduced and whether the grass is annual or perennial. Much of the feature information is included in a bar under the common name of the grass in a rather intuitive icon form. The economic usage sections describe a species' use as a forage grass, garden grass, landscape grass, or value to wildlife. Each grass profile has at least one large image of the inflorescence and many grasses have additional small inset photographs of growth habit in nature.

There are a few items that would have made this book more useful to both beginners and more experienced grass enthusiasts. There are fantastic photographs of the inflorescences included with each grass, but unfortunately the authors did not include photographs of the vegetative structures (ligule and auricle) needed to help identify grasses when the inflorescence is not available. However, the authors have included some vegetative structure information within the "features" of the plant description. It would have also been beneficial to have the growth habit photographs that accompany many of the plant descriptions for every grass included in the text. There were a couple of typos/mix-ups noticed; an example is the diagrammed photograph in Figure 5 where the auricle was incorrectly labeled as the ligule. Some other small typos were noticed. Despite these few items, there is no doubt that this is a very useable book for persons with an interest in learning grasses of the Hill Country area.

If you are a beginner to grass identification or are looking for a good color photograph guide to grasses for the Hill Country (and surrounding area) of Texas, *Grasses of the Texas Hill Country* by Brian and Shirley Loflin would be a terrific book to start with. The glossary, writing style and icon quick guide add to making this pictorial book an easy to reference and use. This book is easily recommended for use by young adults and general grass or plant identification enthusiasts.—Lee Luckeydoo, Herbarium, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.